

# John Gill

by J.C. Philpot

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*J.C. Philpot highlights the unparalleled depth and consistency of Dr. Gill's commentary on Scripture, emphasizing its unique qualities and spiritual value.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 119:18, Proverbs 2:6, Romans 12:6, 1 Corinthians 2:13, 2 Timothy 2:15

**Topics:** "Biblical Commentary", "Doctrines Of Grace"

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## Description

J.C. Philpot praises Dr. Gill's Commentary as a sound, consistent, and harmonious exposition of divine truth, based on the analogy of faith, rejecting any interpretations that contradict the doctrines of grace. Dr. Gill's deep knowledge of Hebrew and Rabbinical writings, condensed yet packed explanations, sound sense, fairness of interpretation, and fullness of commentary make his work invaluable. Unlike other commentators, Dr. Gill does not shy away from difficult passages but provides clarity and depth, feeding the soul with honey from the rock and bringing a savor and sweetness to the Scriptures.

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## Transcript

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For a sound, consistent, scriptural exposition of the word of God, no commentary, we believe, in any language can be compared with Dr. Gill's. There may be commentaries on individual books of Scripture, which may surpass Dr. Gill's in depth of research and fullness of exposition: and the great work from which Poole compiled his Synopsis may be more suitable to scholars and divines, as bringing together into one focus all the learning of those eminent men who in the 16th century devoted days and nights to the study and interpretation of the word of God. But for English readers there is no commentary equal to Dr. Gill's. His alone of all we have seen is based upon consistent, harmonious views of divine truth, without turning aside to the right hand or the left. It is said of the late Mr. Simeon, of Cambridge, that his plan of preaching was, if he had what is called an Arminian text, to preach from it Arminianism, and if he took a Calvinistic text, to preach from it Calvinism. Not so Dr. Gill. He knew nothing about Arminian texts, or Arminian interpretations. He believed that the Scripture, as an inspired revelation from God, must be harmonious and consistent with itself, and that no two passages could so contradict each other as the doctrines of free will contradict the doctrines of grace. The exhortation of the apostle is, "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith." (Rom. 12:6.) This apostolic rule was closely followed by Dr. Gill. "The proportion," or as the word

literally means, "analogy of faith," was his rule and guide in interpreting the Scripture; and, therefore, as all his explanations were modeled according to the beautiful proportions of divine truth as received by faith, so every view disproportionate to the same harmonious plan was rejected by him as God-dishonoring, inconsistent, and contradictory. It is this sound, consistent, harmonious interpretation of divine truth which has stamped a peculiar weight and value on Dr. Gill's Commentary, such as no other exposition of the whole Scripture possesses.

But besides this indispensable qualification, it has other excellent qualities.

1. An interpreter of the word of God should have a deep and well-grounded knowledge of the languages in which the Scriptures were originally written. This Dr. Gill undoubtedly possessed. His knowledge of Hebrew, in particular, was deep and accurate, and his acquaintance with the Rabbinical writers, that is, the Jewish expositors of the Old Testament, was nearly unparalleled. Indeed, he has almost overlaid his Commentary too much with his vast and almost cumbrous Rabbinical learning, and seems to have given it more place and attached to it more value than it really deserves.

2. Another striking and admirable feature of this Commentary is, the condensation of thought and expression throughout. Dr. Gill possessed a rare and valuable gift,--that of packing. He will sometimes give four or five explanations of a difficult passage; but his words are so few and well chosen, and the meaning so condensed, that he will pack in three or four lines what most writers would swell to half a page, and then not be half so full, clear, or determinate. His Commentary has thus become full of ideas and germs of thought, which, by-the-by, has made it such a storehouse for parsonic thieves; for the Doctor has in half a dozen lines furnished many a sermon with all the ideas it ever had worth a straw, and has given the two or three grains of gold which, under the pulpit hammer, have been beaten out to last an hour.

3. Another striking feature, in our judgment, of this admirable Commentary is the sound sense and great fairness of interpretation which pervade it. Dr. Gill possessed that priceless gift, a sound, sober mind. His judgment in divine things was not only clear and decisive, but eminently characterized by solidity and sobriety. This preserved him from all wild enthusiastic flights of imagination, as well as from that strong temptation of experimental writers and preachers,--fanciful interpretation. He never runs a figure out of breath, nor hunts a type to death; nor does he find deep mysteries in "nine and twenty knives," or Satan bestriding the old man of sin in Balaam and his donkey.

4. The fullness of the Commentary is another noticeable feature in Dr. Gill's Exposition. Most commentators skip over all the difficult passages. They bring you very nicely and comfortably over all the smooth ground; but just as you come to the marsh and the bog, where a few stepping stones and a friendly hand to help you over them would be acceptable, where is your companion? Gone. Lost himself, perhaps, in the bog; at any rate, not at hand to render any help. And where are the stepping stones he promised to put down? There is hardly one to be seen; or, if there be an attempt at any, they are too small, few, or wide apart to be of the least service. To one who has any insight into the word of truth, how empty, meager, and unsatisfactory are nearly all commentaries. The really difficult passages are skipped over, or by confused attempts at explanation made more difficult than before. Their views of doctrine are confused or contradictory. The sweet vein of experience in the word is never touched upon or brought to light; and even the letter of truth is garbled and mangled, or watered and diluted, until it is made to mean just nothing at all, or the very opposite of the sacred writer's meaning. As dry as a chip, and as hard, stale, and tasteless as a forgotten crust in a corner, these miserable and abortive attempts at opening up the sacred

word of God, instead of feeding you with honey out of the rock, will drain away every drop of life and feeling out of your soul, and leave you as barren and empty as if you had been attending a banter's camp meeting, or hearing a trial sermon of a Cheshunt student as fresh from his theological tutor's hand as his new gown. With all their learning, and with all their labor, they are as destitute of dew as the mountains of Gilboa; of life, as the Dead Sea; of unction and savor, as the shoes of the Gibeonites; and of power and profit as the rocks of Sinai.

5. There is at times a savor and sweetness in the Commentary of Dr. Gill which forms a striking contrast to these heaps of dead leaves. And this gives the crowning value to his exposition of the Scriptures.

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